



Maricopa County

News Release

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Maricopa County Confirms First West Nile Virus Positive Mosquito Sample of this Season

Protect yourself and your family from West Nile virus this Memorial Day Weekend!

This weekend, Maricopa County residents will be honoring the brave men and women who have died for our freedoms. With so many people outdoors, it is important to protect our families and ourselves from mosquitoes. Before heading outdoors, the Maricopa County Environmental Services Department would like to remind people to take precautions against West Nile virus (WNV).

"Prevention is the best tool we have", said Neeraj Deshpande, deputy director of the Maricopa County Environmental Services Department. "The more we can control our mosquito population, the more we can control this virus. This means that we all must make an effort to rid our homes of any standing water where mosquitoes can breed," Deshpande added.

The first positive mosquito sample of this season has been confirmed this month by Maricopa County Environmental Services in the town of Gilbert.

"Through our routine year-round surveillance of collecting and testing mosquitoes throughout the Valley, we found this West Nile virus positive mosquito sample," said John Townsend, Environmental Services Department Vector Control Division manager. "Besides preventing mosquitoes from breeding in your yard, it is important to avoid being bitten," said Townsend.

WNV is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. Approximately 20 percent of people infected with West Nile virus will feel flu-like symptoms occurring three to 15 days after the mosquito bite. Symptoms may include fever, headache, nausea, vomiting, swollen lymph glands, and skin rash.

A small percentage of people who are infected with WNV will experience severe symptoms such as meningitis, encephalitis, paralysis or even death. Persons over the age of 50 are generally at a higher risk for severe symptoms. If a person thinks he or she has WNV symptoms, he or she should consult their health care provider.

So far this year, Maricopa County Department of Public Health has not received laboratory-confirmation of human cases of West Nile virus infection. In 2004, Maricopa County led the nation's counties with 355 people infected with West Nile virus; and 14 people died from the disease in Maricopa County.

"After you've mosquito proofed your home, work with your neighbors to clean up their yards," Townsend recommended.

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Take these precautions to prevent WNV infection:

- Eliminate mosquito-breeding sites around the home by removing standing water in potted plants, tires, bird baths and other containers where water may collect.
- Remove unnecessary clutter.
- Repair window and door screens to keep mosquitoes out of the home.
- Make sure pools and decorative ponds are properly maintained and operational.

Wherever you may be this weekend, bring your insect repellent along and please follow label instructions, especially for use on children. Share your insect repellent with those around you. Additionally:

- Wear light colored clothing with long sleeves and pants.
- If possible, avoid outdoor activity before dawn and after dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- Use protective clothing and insect repellent when exposure to mosquitoes cannot be avoided.

For more information on West Nile virus, to set-up an appointment to obtain mosquito eating fish at no cost to you, to report green pools, file any mosquito related complaint, register on the Fogging Notification System or for WNV materials or presentations for your group/organization, please call the West Nile Virus General Information and Help Line at (602) 506-0700, or visit <http://www.maricopa.gov/wnv>.

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